

I am writing to let you know of my opposition to SB611(HB782). I am quite concerned that it would even be considered that a child of any age should be allowed to make medical decisions for themselves, especially without parent involvement and that providers other than their regular doctor would be able to provide them any type of care.

Children have no ability to understand the long-term risks and consequences of medical decisions and do often do not know or understand their own medical history. Even as an adult keeping track of my medical history can be difficult at times, but I have resources available to me, that I am equipped to use, to aid me in this record keeping. In addition, I am well versed in knowing what kinds of questions to ask about treatment recommendations. Such as, is there any concern about this medication interfering with other medications or over the counter items that I take. While providers are supposed to be attentive to this, it is not always caught and is an important question to ask. Children will not know what they take, the dosage, or the risks associated with medication interactions. In addition, without parent involvement a child may be given something that would interfere with or cause harm when taking with something like an antidepressant that the parent knows nothing about. Children also will not be afforded the benefit of a second opinion. If I am unsure about the care being offered to myself or my child I can consult another professional and determine best course of action. Children will not be able to manage additional opinions or treatment options on their own.

Children with genetic conditions or other diagnosis will be at great risk of complications from taking medications their parents are unaware of. For example, my daughters have a genetic condition that makes anything in the fluoxetine group not recommended for them. That would be many (if not all) of the medications for mental health. Are my 11 year old and 4 year old expected to know that and ask the medical provider about it? The condition is rare and not well known, so I often have to spend time educating providers and providing literature before they can be seen for anything other than routine medical care. Can you ensure that all providers will become well versed in ALL types of conditions so as to avoid any complications such as would arise for my daughters?

And what about for my son? He has so many allergies that finding things he can eat and medications he can take that avoid his allergens is incredibly difficult. Will he be expected to evaluate the ingredients in every medication on his own and cross reference them with his lengthy allergen list? Keeping in mind that medications do not say things like "contains corn" so you have to research the background of each ingredient to find out if that contains an allergen. Medical providers do not provide the service of cross-referencing every ingredient for allergies.

I am also concerned because if the parents are not involved and are also inquiring about medication from a different provider then the child could end up on more medication than is recommended. As someone who previously took Paxil and had withdrawal symptoms when I was late for a dose, it seems a child could also end up intentionally on more medication than they should and become addicted, which is possible with this classification of drug. All without the parents even knowing.

Additionally, children are also at a great risk of having a reaction to medications of all types, but especially in relation to mental health. In addition, not taking medication on the proper schedule

increases the risk of suicide, which is already incredibly high with our children. Mental health medications work best in conjunction with some sort of counseling or therapy, which will again be difficult for a child to obtain on their own.

Another great concern centers around children having medical appointments on their own, without a parent present. Given the incredibly high rate of child abuse, molestation, sex trafficking, etc. that goes on at the hands of teachers, pastors/priests, law enforcement, and medical professionals (and many other people as well) how can it be recommended to leave a child alone with a provider and then ask them to make choices for themselves.

Furthermore, obtaining this medication without parental consent is in direct contraction to all the anti-drug education that is being done. In one breath we (and the government) are telling children not to take things that other people give them, to say no, to talk to their parents, not to keep secrets. In the other breath you want to tell them that it is okay to go behind their parents back, and in fact not only is it okay but it is suggested and acceptable, and they should take things that other people give them, say yes, don't talk to their parents, and keep secrets. The implications of this are great. This will not only have dire consequences toward the war on drugs but I would expect an increase in the rate of missing children, after all they don't have to tell their parents things, like where they're going or who they're with.

The best approach in caring for a child is a team approach that consists of the parents, the child who is becoming educated on how to make these decisions and learning about their own medical history and concerns, and the medical provider. I hope that you will consider that we are to teach our children about the world and as parents we cannot do that if you remove us from the picture.

Please vote NO for this bill!

Sincerely,

-Caryn Koppenhoefer

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